

WISCONSIN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RELEASE: COVID-19 could affect severe weather sheltering plans

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MADISON, Wis. — With severe weather season underway in Wisconsin, it's essential that people reevaluate their planning and anticipate the effects COVID-19 could have on where they take shelter. While it is important to practice good social distancing, ReadyWisconsin encourages everyone to make sure that doesn't prevent them from seeking safety during a severe thunderstorm or tornado warning.

"While COVID-19 remains a serious threat to public health, severe weather also poses a major risk to the safety of everyone in its path," said Dr. Darrell L. Williams, Wisconsin Emergency Management administrator. "While we do want people to practice safe social distancing when possible, that should never stop them from going to a shelter during a dangerous weather event."

While many people are following Gov. Tony Evers' Safer at Home order and limiting non-essential travel, there is still a possibility they will be out in the community when severe weather strikes. There are also many people who often rely on public facilities for shelter during a severe weather event. People should be aware that many community shelters, such as government-maintained buildings, may currently be closed due to the pandemic response.

Any decision to keep those facilities open to the public is at the discretion of the agency that owns and maintains those locations. If someone typically relies on a community shelter during a severe weather event, WEM encourages them to verify the status of that location and adjust their plans accordingly. This should be done before there is severe weather in the forecast and before any warnings are issued.

People can also take steps to give themselves as much warning as possible about approaching severe weather by regularly checking the forecast. Also, ensure their phone is equipped to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and get a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) All Hazards Weather Radio with battery backup for your home and office. The alerts these devices provide when severe weather is spotted can save valuable time in reaching a safe location.

Find more tips on preparing for severe weather at <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov>. You can also follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/readywisconsin](https://www.facebook.com/readywisconsin)) and Twitter ([www.twitter.com/readywisconsin](https://www.twitter.com/readywisconsin)).

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